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Flood-Ravaged Libraries Aided

On June 23, 1972, Hurricane "Agnes" struck in all her fury and, during the succeeding days, flood waters rendered one-third of the city of Wilkes-Barre uninhabitable. The neighboring borough of Kinston, with a population of 21,000, found only 20 houses unscathed when the waters receded.

Damage to medical facilities in the region was almost unbelievable. The Luzerne County Medical Society reported that 155 physicians - two-thirds of the doctors in the area - had offices in the section devastated by the flood.

At the height of the storm, patients from Mercy and Nesbitt Hospitals were evacuated by automobile, ambulance, boat, and helicopter to other hospitals on higher ground and to a temporary hospital set up at College Misericordia, about 12 miles from the city.

The 350-bed Mercy Hospital and its associated nursing school suffered heavy damage. Water reached the ceiling of the first floor, wiping out libraries and administrative offices for both the school and hospital. Not a book or catalog card was left to show that the libraries had even existed! Nesbitt Memorial Hospital Library fared somewhat better. Water did not quite reach the top shelves.

The destruction was not confined to hospital libraries. Both King's College and Wilkes College lost scientific and periodical collections which had been available to local health professionals. Historical material was completely inundated on the lower level of The Luzerne County Medical Society quarters.

While citizens of Wilkes-Barre were digging out of the mud, Elliott Morse and his staff of the Mid-Eastern Regional Medical Library at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia were busy developing a regional plan for the restoration of medical library services. In addition to planning, the RML provided more tangible support in the way of stand-by services and acquisition of duplicate copies of medical journals for later distribution among the stricken libraries. Meanwhile, in Bethesda, NLM Director Martin M. Cummings requested Extramural Program staff to do what they could to assist the medical library community.

Miss Jackie Rustigian of the Philadelphia RML staff and Mrs. Janet Welsh of the NLM-EP staff were dispatched to Wilkes-Barre. Mrs. Betsy Schreder, Librarian of

(Continued on Page 3)

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SUNY Provides MEDLINE Service

In March, MEDLINE service began to be provided on a regular basis from the Computer Center of the State University of New York (SUNY), thus offering additional capacity to meet the need for MEDLINE service (up 30% from January to February 1973) and to provide a backup when NLM's computer is down. The SUNY computer is connected to the network of TYMSHARE, Inc., just like NLM's. (Instructions for accessing the SUNY computer will be issued to MEDLINE users in the near future.) The SUNY computer will be able to handle 40 simultaneous MEDLINE users, nearly doubling the capacity of the service.

This MEDLINE service is being provided from the same computer that supports the SUNY Biomedical Communication Network (BCN), a pioneer of large on-line services. The SUNY BCN has provided on-line search services against the MEDLARS data base since fall 1968 to users throughout the SUNY system and to many institutions outside New York, reaching as far south as the University of Virginia, west to Indiana and Illinois, and north to Harvard.

MEDLINE is *not* replacing the SUNY BCN for users of the latter service. The integrity of the SUNY service has been maintained; the capacity of the SUNY system has been increased to allow providing MEDLINE in addition to the prior services. It is also important to note that MEDLINE services are not automatically available to SUNY users. To become a MEDLINE user, all qualified institutions must continue to deal directly with the National Library of Medicine through their Regional Medical Library.

This expansion of MEDLINE service via the SUNY computer represents a unique Federal-State cooperative effort and opens the way for new opportunities in networking services.

End Of An Era

February 19th was the last day of NLM-sponsored MEDLINE service on the computer of the System Development Corporation in Santa Monica, California, thus concluding a valuable experiment. Our first on-line service, AIM-TWX, was started at SDC in May 1970. Its immediate success led to the planning and development of MEDLINE, which began operation in October 1971. The success of both was due, in large measure, to the prior work done at SDC (some $7,000,000 worth for Department of Defense) and the experience, expertise, and enthusiasm of the SDC personnel who participated in the development of AIM-TWX and MEDLINE.

Dr. Kissman Honored

Dr. Henry M. Kissman, NLM's Associate Director for Specialized Information Services (SIS), has been selected to receive the Superior Service Award of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Dr. John F. Sherman, Acting Director, NIH, will make the formal presentation at the Fifth Annual NIH Honor Awards Ceremony in June.

Dr. Kissman, who came to the Library from the Food and Drug Administration in June 1970, will receive his certificate for Superior Service "in recognitio of his extraordinary ability in supervising the assimilation and organization of significant toxicological resources into effective information retrieval services for the scientific community."

(Flood-Ravaged Libraries, from Page 1)

the Wilkes-Barre VA Hospital, offered to serve as local coordinator and to arrange for a meeting of interested hospital and library personnel.

Because many of the people involved, including Mrs. Schreder, had to find new housing as well as help reestablish the medical services, it was deemed advisable to wait until the beginning of September to hold a Wilkes-Barre regional meeting. On September 7, 16 representatives met for a full day with Miss Rustigian, Mrs. Welsh, and Mrs. Schreder in a conference room at the VA Hospital to discuss regional plans.

The VA Hospital and Wilkes-Barre General Hospital had suffered no damage; they generously offered the use of their libraries to health professionals in the area. Since it will be quite some time until the other hospital libraries can be in full operation, the General Hospital was advised to apply for a grant to strengthen its own collection so that better service would be more widely available. Resource grant applications were also discussed with Mercy and Nesbitt Hospitals, as well as with the Medical Society.

Because of the urgency of the situation, Dr. Leroy Langley, Associate Director for Extramural Programs, presented the grant proposals to the Biomedical Library Review Committee at their October Meeting. The Committee recommended that funds be made available to the three hospitals as soon as possible.

Not only are the collections being renewed, but a very effective library network is being created in the now-dried-out city.

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See enclosed order form for special advance ordering of the NLM Current Catalog, 1972 Annual Cumulation (to appear late May 1973).

NLM Computer Problems

The NLM 370/155 has been plagued recently with repeated illnesses. A major diagnostic effort was undertaken by NLM and IBM to identify the trouble, which seems to occur rarely in the 370 series. Evidence of deterioration in the circuits of the computer has led to the decision that IBM (at its own expense) will replace all the circuit boards in the Central Processing Unit (CPU). This radical surgery will be performed on March 23-25 and a marked improvement in system reliability is expected after the shakedown of the revitalized system.

Evolution of the American Medical Periodical

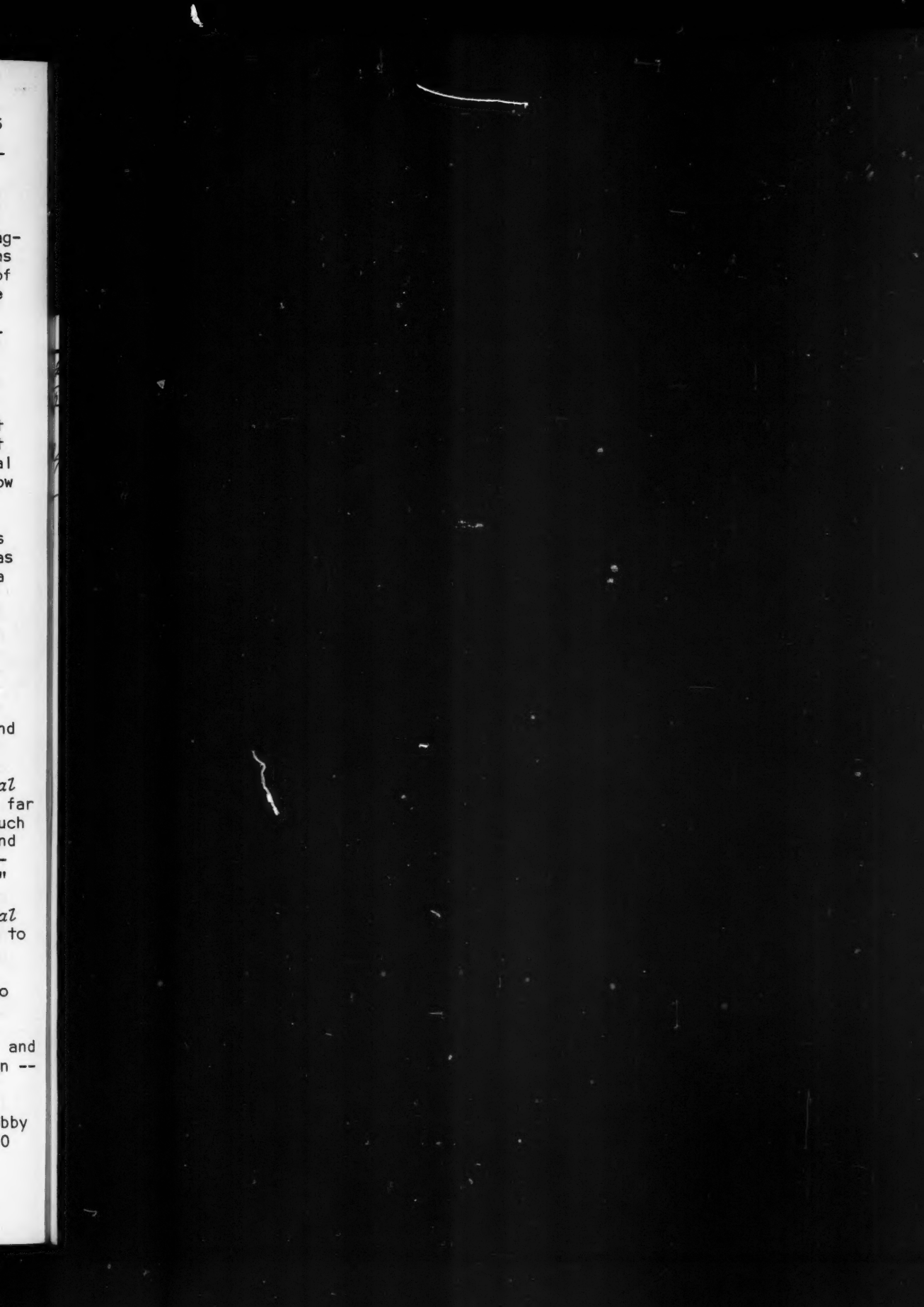
The medical journal of today has a long and interesting history which, in great part, follows the growth of scientific knowledge and its subsequent development into branches, disciplines, and specialties. The origins of the medical journal are traced in "The Evolution of the American Medical Periodical," an exhibit now in the NLM lobby.

The early American physician or scientist who wished to share his work with his colleagues was compelled to submit his writing to a European publication such as the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London.* Displayed are a case report by James Bate, Surgeon of Leonard-Town, Maryland, and a report by Benjamin Franklin, both published in the *Transactions* in 1758.

The first American journal devoted solely to medicine was a quarterly, the *Medical Repository,* published in New York from 1797 to 1824. Each issue contained seven or eight original contributions, often in the form of a letter, followed by a review section covering a variety of books and pamphlets, and, finally, a miscellany headed "Medical and Philosophical News," both domestic and foreign.

The first issue of America's second medical periodical, the *Philadelphia Medical Museum,* carried an editorial statement which sounds quite contemporary: "As by far the greater number of practitioners have neither leisure nor opportunity for such extensive reading, as is essential to keep pace with the various discoveries and improvements in the science of medicine; every plan, by which both time and expense may be lessened, must essentially prove beneficial to our profession...."

Another noteworthy journal on display is the *Philadelphia Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences,* edited by Nathaniel Chapman, who established it in 1820 to refute the disparaging remark by Sidney Smith in the *Edinburgh Review:* "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue? What does the world yet owe to American physicians or surgeons?"

The American Journal of Dental Science (1839) was our first specialty journal, and the *American Journal of Insanity* (1844) the first medical specialty publication -- both to be seen in the current exhibit.

"The Evolution of the American Medical Periodical" will be in the Library's lobby from March 12 to July 1, 1973; visitors are welcome Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m., and Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.